

ABSTRACT

Methods and systems for operating an online marketplace for the sale of services associated with self-help moving and relocating are described. A customer enters an online marketplace where service providers offer services relating to moving and relocating, specifically in the "do-it-yourself" moving field. The venue for the online marketplace is an Internet web site or a site on a computer network and is operated by a host that determines which service providers will be listed on the site. A typical self-help moving customer may enter the marketplace after completing an initial transaction with the host, such as reserving a moving truck or trailer and other moving equipment. In many instances this transaction is what initially draws the customer to the site. Once in the marketplace, the customer can view informational content on numerous vendors providing services relating to moving and relocating. Based on the estimates provided by the marketplace, the customer selects the vendor and "purchases/prepays for" his services on the marketplace. The funds are held in escrow until the transaction is fulfilled to the customer's satisfaction. The customer is provided a confirmation code. The code is given to the service provider upon completion of the job. This is the key that unlocks the funds. The marketplace also does not release the funds unless and until all parties are satisfied with the transaction. The customer selects the vendor that best suits the needs and budget of the customer by viewing rates, reviews, ratings, customer feedback, and background information on the vendor. In this manner control over the transaction lies more with the customer than with the vendor.